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SUCCESS STORY

Multi-Pronged Plan Counters HIV/AIDS

City adopts USAID strategy to detect, treat and prevent the disease



Pingxiang vice mayor Pan Shao Fang has welcomed USAID's support with HIV/AIDS outreach, counseling and prevention in her city along the China-Vietnam border.

"The spread of HIV/AIDS would have people panicked if it weren't for USAID and its programs," said Pingxiang's vice mayor, Pan Shao Fang.

As a child during China's Cultural Revolution, Pan Shao Fang was taught to distrust the American people. Now, as vice mayor of a city on the China-Vietnam border, she is embracing Americans as partners in her fight against HIV/AIDS.

Three years ago, a USAID-funded non-governmental organization began helping health officials in Pingxiang City and Guangxi Province formulate a plan to prevent, detect and treat HIV/AIDS with the hope of replicating the program throughout China. "The spread of HIV/AIDS would have people panicked if it weren't for USAID and its programs," Pan said.

Guangxi Province, where Pingxiang is located, has the third-highest number of HIV infections in China, mostly in cities and border towns where drugs are smuggled from the Golden Triangle. Heroin's impact has been grave: 80 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS in Guangxi Province contracted the virus in the course of taking heroin. The highest-risk groups are injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men.

USAID, provincial and local officials have taken a multi-pronged approach to combat HIV/AIDS. Women learn about hygiene, obtain medicines and can be tested for HIV at the Puzhai Health Clinic, a USAID-funded clinic at Friendship Pass, a truck stop known for its sex trade. The clinic counseled more than 1,000 sex workers and 5,000 others in its first two years of operation. In addition, posters promoting safe sex are displayed at border crossings and in hotels, where condoms are available in the rooms.

After considering the impact the USAID-funded HIV/AIDS program has had on her community, Pan said her childhood view of Americans was wrong. She now believes Americans are warm, charitable, and concerned about people half the globe away.